

our communities, and defend our homeland. Through their public service, they have strengthened our democracy, and their dedication to faith and family has enriched our Nation's character.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a happy St. Patrick's Day.

George W. Bush

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 2004

Taoiseach, thank you very much. Thanks for the lovely gift of shamrocks. It is a beautiful symbol of a beautiful land. Laura and I welcome you back to the White House. We're honored to have you join us to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

This day is always a happy one for Americans. In some places, Americans get a little too happy. [*Laughter*] Today we reaffirm the bonds of friendship between our countries. We remember a courageous man who preached a gospel of peace. We celebrate a heritage that is claimed by millions of my countrymen. There's an Irish saying that there is luck in sharing. For more than two centuries, your country and mine have shared responsibilities. We've shared aspirations, and we have shared values.

From my Nation's earliest days, Americans of Irish descent have helped to establish and define America's most cherished principles. They've helped to defend the liberty of their adopted homeland. Today, the people of the United States and the people of Ireland continue to share so much. Our economies are more closely linked than ever. Together, we are fighting terrorism, a danger that has brought destruction and grief to Americans and Irish alike and to the world.

I join the *Taoiseach* in sending condolences to the people of Spain as they remembered their murdered countrymen. I thank you for your strong support in our common struggle.

Our nations are also standing for peace and justice in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan and beyond. We share a common vision for Northern Ireland. We seek a lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland, a peace that will allow people to live free of terror and intimidation.

We seek a region that is stable and prosperous and tolerant and locally governed. I commend Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair and all of those who are working so hard to implement the Good Friday Agreement. I call for a permanent end to all political violence. There's no place for paramilitaries in a democratic society. The partnership of America and Ireland is close. It is lasting, and it is important to the peace of the world.

I look forward to this summer to visiting Ireland for the EU and U.S. Summit, to strengthen the essential partnership between the United States and Europe. *Taoiseach*, may the friendship between your people and mine prove as strong in the years to come as it has in the centuries past.

May all the people of our nations have a happy Saint Patrick's Day. We ask God's blessings on the people of Ireland, and may God continue to bless the United States. Welcome.¹⁵⁷NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Assistance Provided to Azerbaijan

March 17, 2004

Dear _____:

On December 30, 2003, I exercised my authority to extend the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, concerning assistance to Azerbaijan. Consistent with paragraph (g)(6) of the heading "Assistance for the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union" in title II of the Kenneth M.